DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 353 111 RC 018 930

AUTHOR Talbot, Wendy
TITLE Emotional Safety in Outdoor and Experiential Education.
PUB DATE Oct 92
NOTE 10p.; In: Hanna, Glenda M., Ed. Celebrating Our Tradition Charting Our Future: Proceedings of the International Conference of the Association for Experiential Education (20th, Banff, Alberta, Canada, October 8-11, 1992); see RC 018 928.
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Trends; Experiential Learning; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; *Outdoor Education; Program Descriptions; *Safety; *Security (Psychology); *Sexual Abuse
IDENTIFIERS Canada; Emotional Abuse; Harassment; *Physical Abuse

ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the concept of emotional safety in outdoor programming. Information and protocols developed by the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School are included that outline procedures that staff follow in the event of an "assault" on any student, volunteer, or staff. For clarification, definitions are given for emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. The protocol for emotional safety includes assessing the situation, reporting information to appropriate staff, implementing evacuation procedures, and reporting physical and sexual assault to law enforcement officials. The protocol for a sexual assault includes specific considerations such as immediate evacuation; the same sex staff member obtaining information from the victim; enforcement of confidentiality; protecting the victim from the alleged perpetrator; preserving any physical evidence; and notification of family members and law enforcement officials. It also describes sexual abuse incidents involving both children and adults, with tips to control the problem. Procedures for addressing suicide include confronting the student about their intent and specific instructions for ensuring the safety of a possible suicidal student. Also included is the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School staff workplace harassment policy that defines situations in terms of: sexual harassment; racial, ethnic, or sexual orientation harassment; and general harassment. Specific steps to take if a staff member is being harassed at the workplace or on an outdoor trip are outlined. (LP)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EMOTIONAL SAFETY IN OUTDOOR AND EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Wendy Talbot, Associate Director
Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School
P.O. Box 116, Station S
Toronto, Ontario M5M 4L6

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Barbara Baker
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

ED 353 114

Outdoor Education has traditionally been very cognizant of the need for safety in its programs, particularly those with so-called "High Risk" activities. This concern for safety has been focused primarily on the physical aspects; prevention of accidents and injury. There is an ever-increasing need to expand our definition of safety to include what I will herein-after refer to as Emotional Safety.

As our programs develop and mature we must keep up with the changes in society and the new knowledge available to us. We are becoming more and more aware of the personal histories individuals are bringing with them on our courses. As a result, we must be prepared to respond in a sensitive appropriate manner. We can no longer assume that if something worked in the past that it will work or even be proper today. We live in the 1990s. Attitudes that existed in the '60s or '70s, where it was cool to be a renegade or anti-establishment, need to be updated for our present situations.

We know that sexual harassment exists. We know that emotional, physical and sexual abuse exists (E.S.P.), suicide is epidemic in certain segments of our society; Native Canadians, and youth, have particularly high rates. Culture and lifestyle diversity needs to be recognized. There is a long list of people with different needs and circumstances that can no longer be ignored or minimized. If we are to be responsible educators we must be aware of the issues and how to best facilitate emotionally safe programs.

How successful we are in accomplishing this task, in large part is dependant upon our attitude and knowledge of the issues. We are not required to be therapists. We do, however, need to recognize and be aware of our own issues and our approach and attitude to the subject.

This workshop is designed to introduce the concept of Emotional Safety in outdoor programming. Information and protocols developed by the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School have been a valuable resource for staff in facilitating safe courses. These tools have also proven valuable to other programs and Outward Bound Schools. It is our hope, that by sharing these resources, we in the Outdoor Experiential Education field will continue to keep apace of current issues and trends in society.

Protocol for Emotional, Sexual and Physical Abuse

The purpose of this protocol is to outline the procedure that Outward Bound Staff will follow in the event of an "assault" on any student, volunteer or staff.

RC 018930

Emotional abuse is defined as verbal abuse upon another individual with the intent to be harmful. This may also take the form of passive aggressive behaviour (i.e. someone consciously doing or saying something that may offend or hurt another, in a manner that is subtle and not always obvious). It is also important to consider body language and the physical posture that an individual

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

presents.

Sexual abuse is defined as any unwanted contact, either overt or covert from another individual. This can take the form of touching or being forced to touch another in a sexual context. It may also include such activities as "flashing" or showing sexual parts. Sexual harassment in the form of verbal innuendos or subtleties that may not be easily defined must also be considered as a serious violation of an individual's rights.

Physical abuse is defined as any unwanted contact that is associated with aggression or violence in any way. This may also include threats by one individual or group against another.

Emotional Safety Protocol - E.S.P.

Incidents of sexual, physical or emotional abuse ***will not be tolerated*** at C.O.B.W.S. We have a mandate that individuals will be treated with respect and that a person's right to a physically and emotionally safe course be protected. When a person's safety or rights are impeded then the following actions must be considered.

Setting the tone for emotional safety and all that it entails is of utmost importance to the running of an Outward Bound course. It is the responsibility of instructors to ensure that students are aware of our commitment to protecting the rights of others and respecting the need for emotional safety. This should be done at the beginning of the course.

1. The instructor or staff person on the scene will assess the situation. If there is an accusation of assault made or an assault is witnessed, then the C.D. will be notified immediately. It is not the responsibility of Outward staff to prove allegations. It is their responsibility to act immediately and sensitively to the situation.

2. Upon gathering all pertinent information, the C.D. will notify the P.D. and A.D. If the brigade is on the trail then an ***evacuation procedure will be implemented.***

3. It is important to remember that physical and sexual assault is a crime and must be treated as such. As professionals we are ***mandated by law*** to report all allegations of sexual assault, if the individual is under 18 years (this includes past and present situations). It is important to inform the victim, in a sensitive way, to this mandate.

Specific Considerations for Sexual Assault

When a person is sexually assaulted a number of coping mechanisms may occur; denial, minimizing, keeping it a secret. The person may identify with and/or protect the perpetrator in some way. An emotional breakdown may occur. We must handle the situation with compassion and control. By controlling the situation we may provide a safer environment for all. We must, however, be conscious of not usurping power from a victim who has been made to feel powerless.

a. It will be assumed, at all times, that if an accusation of sexual assault is made then the victim will be believed and the evacuation plan will go into effect immediately.

b. Information regarding the assault should be taken by a staff person of the same sex as the victim. This is very important to the well being of that individual. It is not important, at this time, to get all the intimate details of the assault.

c. Confidentiality is essential when dealing with the issue of sexual assault. We must be sensitive to this situation from a humanistic and legal perspective.

d. The victim will be protected from the alleged perpetrator. If need be, the perpetrator will be evacuated from the group by the instructor who feels most competent in dealing with and controlling the perpetrator. If an appropriate instructor is not available, then the perpetrator will be isolated within the group under constant supervision. Staff both male and female must always consider their own safety in conjunction with their students.

e. In some cases where legal action may be taken it will be important to preserve any physical evidence. It is not possible to outline all the procedures required to preserve evidence, therefore, it is essential to contact Homeplace immediately for support.

f. Depending upon the age of those involved, parents or significant others will be notified immediately. The A.D. or designate will follow the procedure as outlined in the emergency procedure guidelines.

g. The appropriate authorities will be notified (i.e. Police, C.A.S.) by the A.D. or designate. It will be important to consider the wishes of the victim in the consideration to report.

How can I know if I or someone else was a victim of Sexual Abuse?*

This is a list of possible examples of sexual abuse incidents, including child and adult. Some incidents are obvious, but many are not. This is not a complete list.

Were you:

- Touched in sexual areas?
- Shown sexual movies or forced to listen to sexual talk?
- Made to pose for seductive or sexual photographs?
- Subjected to unnecessary medical treatment?
- Forced to perform oral sex on an adult or sibling as a child?
- Raped or otherwise penetrated?
- Fondled, kissed, or held in a way that made you uncomfortable?
- Forced to take part in ritualized abuse in which you were physically or sexually tortured?
- Made to watch sexual acts or look at sexual parts?
- Bathed in such a way that felt intrusive to you?
- Objectified and ridiculed about your body?
- Encouraged or goaded into sex you didn't really want?
- Told all you were only good for was sex?
- Involved in child prostitution or pornography?

* Taken from ***The Courage to Heal***, Ellen Bass and Laura David, 1988.

Flags to watch out for

1. Is there a dominant negative leader in the group?
2. Is there a bully who wants control?
3. Watch for unhealthy alliances, two negative people forming a tight friendship.
4. Is anyone continually testing the authority or judgement of the instructors?
5. Are you as an instructor feeling threatened by a student(s)? Are you feeling out of control, intimidated or nervous around a student(s)?
6. Who is sleeping in what tent? Should there be single gender tents? Be aware of the guideline for tenting partners, i.e. more than two students/per tent in co-ed situations.
7. What is the history of your students; any flags, concerns?
8. General tone of the group; do they respect each other?
9. Are the ducks lining up? If so, how are you going to change the situation? Who can support you? It's ok to ask for help. Trust your intuition, it's there for a reason.

Suicide Protocol

Suicide has reached epidemic proportions within certain populations in this country. Our adolescent and Native groups are at very high risk. Because we work with these populations, we need to know the signs that may indicate a student's suicidal ideation. It is important to remember that there may be no overt signs and that our intuition is our best resource. The following are COBWS procedures for addressing the issue if it should arise in the field or at Homeplace.

1. If a student is expressing any thoughts of suicide, or is any way exhibiting behaviour that is not consistent with positive self regard; or if you have any reason to suspect that a student is suicidal, then the question must be asked, ***"Are you thinking of hurting yourself or killing yourself"***. This must be asked in a straightforward manner but with compassion and in a safe, private place (being direct gives the individual permission to discuss the issue).

2. If the student says "yes" or does not respond in a manner that allays your fears, the following steps must be taken immediately.

   a) Instructor/Course Director interviews student to assess the level of lethality.

      History: previous attempts, family history of suicide or abuse, substance abuse, precipitating event(s), level of external stress, severity and duration of ideation, level of hope.

      Plan: is there a plan, how detailed, method, is there a suicide note?

Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School
Staff Workplace Harassment Policy

It is the intent of the Canadian Outward Bound Wilderness School that all staff experience a working and living environment that is free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. No one may be harassed because of race, ethnicity, colour religion, sexual orientation, gender, marital status, family status, disability or any other reason prohibited by law.

This document is designed as a tool for use by staff who experience harassment from other staff. It also may help you facilitate the solving the problems on a student level.

At COBWS, we have a unique work environment. We work long and odd hours and share very close living quarters. We need therefore, to be particularly careful and respectful of each other's personal boundaries and space. We must guard against making assumptions based on our own comfort level and we must always be cognizant of others' feelings.

Anyone who has a complaint of harassment is strongly urged to bring the issue to the immediate attention of his/her supervisor, any senior staff person or the Assoc. Director.

All complaints will be handled in confidence; special privacy safeguards may be applied in handling sexual harassment complaints.

In keeping with the Organization's legal, social and community responsibilities, any complaint of harassment will be treated as a serious matter. Appropriate corrective action, including dismissal; when justified, will be implemented to remedy all violations of this policy.

What is Harassment?

Harassment is defined as any unwanted, persistent or excessive behaviour by another staff member, be it a senior staff or co-worker, which is either verbally or physically malicious, humiliating, offensive or intimidating.

This may include:

Sexual Harassment

- unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendos, taunting of a sexual nature about a person's body, posture or attire which causes awkwardness or embarrassment to the recipient.
- unwelcome physical contact such as: touching, patting or pinching, as well as leering.
- requesting sexual favours from an employee, hinting that an advancement or other benefits may be forthcoming or delayed if accepted or refused.
- threatening or instituting a reprisal against a person who rejects a sexual advance.
- the displaying of sexually explicit, offensive or pornographic materials on school property.

Level of Control: how depressed is student; how much impulse control does student have (consider on and off course history), how reality-based is student's thinking.

Level of Support: how much time alone will the student experience in the next few days, what are the opportunities for personal failure; how much emotional support will there be from others.

b) The Course Director, with the above information, notifies the Program Director and/or the C.D./P.M./A.D. assess situation. Senior staff may inform or request opinion from Associate Director and/or school advisors. Depending on situation, Program Director or designate may notify parents/significant others).

c) Student may return to course only if P.D., family and Course Director concur.

3. If the Brigade is away from base camp the following steps should be taken until Step #2 can be implemented. Regardless of severity of intent the Course Director should be notified *as soon as possible*.

   a) ***Interview*** for level of lethality (see Step #2)

   b) ***Contract*** with the student that she/he will not attempt to hurt themselves for 24 hours.

   c) ***Reduce*** the immediate stress by all means available; this may require altering the course schedule.

   d) ***Structure*** emotional support for the student, utilize staff and brigade members as is appropriate, **don't leave student alone**, be aware of night time when everyone is asleep.

   e) ***Check in*** regularly with the student and be available for support. Be conscious of and sensitive to the issue. Don't be intrusive.

4. Evacuate student to basecamp. Notify Course Director with report on lethality and your assessment of situation.

5. Student may or may not return to course depending on assessment by Program Director and others.

6. If student is transported home, the Course Director will arrange for constant supervision in conjunction with family or significant other. Student must be monitored at all times until family or another responsible person can be with the student.

Wendy Talbot **Associate Director**	**(416)** **(613)**	**(613)**
Philip Blackford **Executive Director**	**(416)** **(613)**	**(416)**
Dr. D. Sauder **Safety Committee Chairman**	**(416)**	**(416)**

Racial/Ethnic or Sexual Orientation	• unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendos or taunting about a person's racial or ethnic background, colour, place of birth, citizenship, ancestry or sexual orientation. • the displaying of racist, derogatory, or offensive pictures or material. • refusing to work with an employee because of his or her racial, ethnic background or sexual orientation.
General	• unwelcome remarks, jokes or behaviours which are intimidating or humiliating to other employees may be considered harassment. • refusing to work with an employee because of his or her gender. • harassment on the basis of community identification or previously stated points.

While in the employment of Outward Bound, it is expected that an individual will conduct him or herself in an appropriate manner at all times. Harassment will not be tolerated, regardless of whether the individuals are "on duty" or not.

Steps To Take If You Are Being Harassed:

Harassment can be very unpleasant, intimidating, confusing and embarrassing. Staff may be reluctant to come forward and report such situations. However, it is important that these issues be dealt with. Therefore, it is essential for the benefit of the individuals involved, as well as other staff and students that ***problems be brought forward***. We all have a responsibility to ensure a safe comfortable environment for everyone involved with the School.

Step I
- Tell the harasser to stop, if you feel comfortable in doing this.
- In some bases the harasser may be unaware that the behaviour is unwelcome. Talking it over may solve the problem.

Step II
- If the behaviour persists, report it to a supervisor.

Step III
- It may be helpful to keep a record of the unwanted behaviour. This is not essential but it will reinforce your complaint. (When did the harassment start? What happened? Who did you talk with? Were there witnesses, anyone else involved? How did you feel?).

Step IV
- Lodge a complaint with a Course Director or a Program Director. If the situation is not resolved, it should be reported to the Associate Director.

If, for any reason, you are not comfortable with any of the steps, you may immediately discuss the situation with the Associate Director.

Actions to Take While on the Trail

The remoteness of your situation will affect the manner in which you handle the situation. It is important to remember that, as an instructor, your first obligation is to your student's safety. With that in mind, you have an obligation to assess the situation in terms of the direct impact on your

student's safety. You must also consider your safety and how this situation is impacting on your ability to function as an instructor.

- Tell the harasser to stop. If the individual is willing to discuss the issue (away from students in a secure place) the problem may be resolved. The previously outlined steps can be applied.

- If the problem persists or you are still uncomfortable with the situation, take steps that will prevent you from being alone with the individual (i.e. arrange in a non-obvious manner to sleep with the students. Be careful not to put students in an awkward or compromising situation). This type of situation should be reported.

- If at any time you feel that the harassment is beyond your control and threatens your safety or the quality of the course, you must contact the Course Director.

- If the situation moves from the realm of harassment to a more overt form of assaultive or abusive behaviour, then evacuation procedures should occur in order to protect yourself and your students.

Workplace Harassment

According to Provincial Code 1981, harassment is a Human Rights violation. The Human Rights Commission insists that employers have a legal obligation to prevent or discourage harassment in the workplace. If harassment occurs, it is expected that the employer will take corrective action immediately.

Outward Bound will endeavour to provide a safe atmosphere for all staff to work and live within the School community. To that end we will:

1. Inform all staff (through community meeting) of the Harassment Policy.
2. Provide clarification and education to staff (through staff training) on the issues of harassment.
3. Inform staff of the procedures for handling harassment complaints (through community meeting and this policy).
4. Initiate action without waiting for an individual complaint when harassing behaviour is known to be occurring.
5. Provide training to Course Directors and Program Directors.

Resolution Procedure

1. Listen to the complainant to determine the nature of the problem.
2. Facilitate the problem solving process.
3. Maintain appropriate level of confidentiality.
4. Ensure environment is safe and secure for all involved.
5. Assist the staff to prepare a written, signed statement, including, Who? What? When? Where? How? Witnesses?
6. Determine if provincial police should be involved.
7. Interview all individuals involved, including the alleged harasser.
8. If appropriate, review findings with complainant and alleged harasser (separately).

9. the Associate Director, in conjunction with the Executive Director and legal advisors, if appropriate, will determine action to be taken.
10. A written report of the investigation will be completed by the Associate Director. Confidentiality of the individuals involved will be maintained whenever possible.
11. Investigation of complaints of harassment which have occurred in the past are difficult to investigate. However, depending on circumstances, the School will endeavour to resolve any problems brought forward.
12. Copies of the investigation report will be available to complainant and harasser upon clearance from our legal advisors.